

**For Immediate Release:** *September 16, 2009*

**Washington DC** - In a [letter](#) to the Chairman and Ranking Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, Congressman Duncan Hunter urged the adoption of an independent review panel to consider and make nonbinding recommendations on Medal of Honor nominations. The panel, which Hunter recommended consist of previous MoH recipients or selected representatives from veteran organizations, would act as a "sounding board" between the Department of Defense and each service branch.

"Tomorrow, President Obama will present the sixth Medal of Honor for combat heroism in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Congressman Hunter. "The recipient, Army Sergeant First Class Jared C. Monti, represents the first Soldier to receive the Medal of Honor for action in Afghanistan, a decision that I strongly commend for his service and sacrifice. Sergeant Monti is a national hero whose story will take its rightful place in the proud history of our nation's military and inspire generations of Americans.

"Still, among all the examples of combat bravery in Iraq and Afghanistan, there has yet to be a single living Medal of Honor recipient from either war. This fact continues to raise questions about the criteria for determining award recipients, which appears to have been subjectively raised to include actions only resulting in death.

"To be clear, the Medal of Honor nomination process should begin with the appropriate service branch and end with the President, consistent with the recommendation of the Secretary of Defense. There should be no direct role for Congress in this process, especially when it comes to determining recipients.

"However, an impartial review panel, consisting of Medal of Honor recipients or even representatives from selected veterans groups, is a logical step toward protecting the integrity of the award process and ensuring actions consistent with the history of the Medal of Honor are rightly recognized. The panel should not have authority to overturn decisions, nor should its recommendations be binding. In the interest of eliminating clear inconsistencies, it should simply consider nominations and make recommendations as necessary."

Hunter worked with his colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee to include a provision in the Fiscal Year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act that requires a review of the Medal of Honor award process be initiated by the Secretary of Defense.